

Terwilliger Hot Springs Talking Points

Terwiliger Fire

The Sunday, Aug. 19, 2018 an 8 acre fire was initially reported at 3:21 p.m. The fire grew quickly to 110 acres by that evening. Exceptionally dry conditions led to the fire's quick growth.

On Thursday, August 23, Southwest Area Type 2 Incident Management Team #3 announced in the daily update that fire did burn through the Terwilliger (Cougar) hot springs. Assessments will begin as soon as it is safe for staff to enter the area.

Due to damage from the Terwilliger fire burning in and around the springs, the hot springs will remain closed this fall/winter and possibly into 2019 in order to provide long-term public safety.

The trail leading to the springs experienced moderate-high burn severity (???) and will require rehabilitation. The restroom, kiosk and other structures also sustained damaged and will need to be replaced.

Updates on the condition of the springs and the open/closed status will be posted at (??? Unless we create a new page) <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/willamette/recreation/recarea/?recid=4391> (short link: <https://go.usa.gov/xUJay>)

Snags and other hazard trees present a significant hazard to wildland firefighters. Snags typically have much lower fuel moistures than live, green trees; they are subject to rot and they burn more readily. In the process, they often throw fire brands far in advance of the main fire and often burn through more quickly than green trees, falling with little or no warning. Live, green trees have been weakened by insects, disease, weather, past fires, and age present equal hazard and can fall without warning.

Hazared trees surround the trail and the springs. These trees have imminent risk of falling and present hazards. These "danger trees" will be need to be assessed by a special team, who will go through and look for hazards for hundreds of feet to each side of the trail to the hot springs before the conditions of the springs itself can even be assessed and before the site can be reopened.

There are, and will be for some time, many hazards. There are many snags coming down already in the burned areas, which pose one of the greatest risks to firefighter and public safety.

Impact to Visitors

Many are in a state of shock and grief right now about the damage to the hot springs.

We want to offer ways the community can come together and help facilitate rebuilding

FAQs we should answer

How badly were the hot springs and trail burned?

Where can I find a map of the burned area?

Where can I find more information on the fire's impacts?

What can be done to help restore the area?

What can people do to help? Trail work, donations ?????

Closure History

Top Pool Closure

In April 2014, a large rock and debris fell into the top pool from the hillside above the pool and nearly hit a visitor. Safety concerns closed the top pool

In October 2015, the first phase of work to stabilize the hillside behind the top pool. The work included removing the older shelter, closing the man-made cave, and removing a portion of the vertical failure area. Once complete, the lower three pools will again be open for the public's enjoyment. Before the top pool can be safely reopened, an assessment will be made as to if additional work is needed to address the stability issues.

In October 2016, the second phase of work to stabilize the hillside behind the top pool began. The work will include building additional rock support to the hillside above the pool and completing drainage work.

In May 2018 the final phase to stabilize the hillside began and the top pool was reopened for the first time since 2014.

Aufderheide Scenic Byway (Forest Service Road 19) Closures

In August 2017, a large stretch of Aufderheide Drive was closed due to fires in the Horse Creek Complex. The road reopened October 14.

On December 27, 2017 a landslide blocked all access to the hot springs from Hwy 126. The road from Hwy 58 was blocked by snow for a few months so there was no access to the springs for some time.

On July 27 the landslide debris were completely cleared and Aufderheide Drive was reopened and visitors could access the hot springs from Hwy 126.

On August 25, during suppression response to the fire, another slide occurred, blocking access on FRS 19, limiting suppression efforts for ??? days, showing continued instability of the steep slopes above the road cut.

Debris removal - existing permits from Army Corps, etc were still valid for debris removal (????)

Hot Springs Overview

Soaking in hot springs is a very popular and sought out activity in Oregon. On the Willamette National Forest, there are four hot springs destinations. Terwilliger (Cougar) Hot Springs, Belknap (a private, developed springs), Breitenbush (a private, developed springs), and McCredie Hot Springs.

Terwilliger Hot Springs, known more commonly as Cougar Hot Springs is often voted one of the best hot springs in Oregon.

Thousands of people from all over the state and beyond come to soak in the tiered soaking pools hidden in the forest near Cougar Reservoir along the McKenzie River.

There are six clothing-optional soaking pools spaced apart by rock walls laid out in steps down a ravine. Temperatures range from 85 degrees in the lower pool to 112 degrees in the upper pool. The pools are 3-12 feet across and an average of 2-3 feet deep. The pool floors are mostly bedrock but some gravel, sand and debris remain at the bottom of the pool.

The springs are located off Aufderheide Scenic Byway (Forest Service Road 19), 55 miles or about a 1+ hour drive from Eugene, OR. The ¼ mile Rider Creek Trail leads visitors to the hot springs

The day use area is operated by American Land and Leisure. There is a \$7 per person, per day fee which includes the hot springs, trail, lagoon and parking lot. There is also an annual pass available. The fees help pay for cleaning and maintenance of the site.

AL&L closes and cleans the springs each Thursday from 8am-12pm for cleaning

The hot springs are open year round as long as Aufderheide Scenic Byway (Forest Service Road 19) is not blocked by snow.

History

The Willamette National Forest history files show that on March 12, 1906 H. Terwilliger filed a lode claim to [the] well known South Fork Hot Springs, claiming to have a ledge of cinnabar. Rangers believe [the] claim is merely a subterfuge to secure patent [title] to [the] hot springs for [a] summer resort.

A 1912 Forest Service map of the old Cascade National Forest shows a Terwilliger mining claim was located at the springs. The mining claim was denied by the government on the grounds that the mineral claim was merely a ploy to open a resort much like nearby Belknap and Foley Springs. Larry Clemenson, a fire lookout on Indian Ridge in 1925 and 1926, wrote that: Smith Taylor knew about them [the hot Springs and] Smith said he named them 'Terwilliger' (Clemenson, 1972).

In early 1927, the Forest Service offered to let any qualified developer propose a site development plan for the hot springs. The desired development included a main hotel building with lobby, dining room, kitchen and at least ten bedrooms; at least five 7 cottages; a store with campers supplies; rest rooms for the general public; a concrete swimming pool; septic tank sewage system; electric lighting plant; bridge; trail; and a 232 public campground. From 1927 to 1930, A.J. Jacobs, Dr. W.W. Elgin, M.C. Davis, and AC. Nelson of the Terwilliger Hot Springs, Inc., held a Forest Service special use permit for a resort near the springs, but it was never developed.

Hiram Terwilliger (1840-1918), born in Vernon, Ohio, was the son of James and Sophronia Ann (Hurd) Terwilliger. The Terwilliger family was among the first settlers of New York State and Hiram's great-grandmother owned a large tract of land at the site of New York City. James Terwilliger (1809-1892), Sophronia and five children came to Oregon by wagon train in 1845, in a journey that took six months. Sophronia died before reaching Western Oregon. He built the first house and established a blacksmith shop that was the first business in Portland. In 1847, James married Mrs. Palinda Green. They took a Donation Land Claim in South Portland in 1850. Hiram was five years old on the journey to Oregon. In 1862 Hiram went to Idaho to seek his fortune in gold, but he soon returned to Oregon and engaged in a variety of business ventures including working in a logging camp. He married Mary Edwards in 1869 and they had four children James, Joseph, Charlotte, and Virtue (Gaston, 1911).

In the 1970s-1990s this area was filled with hundreds of people camping near the springs. There were large parties, violence, littering, drug and alcohol abuse, and more.

In 1998 (???) the Willamette National Forest implemented new rules to make the area safer and to preserve the special quality of this popular and high use area.

Terwilliger Hot Springs was designated day-use only area, an alcohol ban was implemented and glass containers were not allowed.

Under Forest Order 18-2013-01-03, implemented in 2013, camping was restricted to developed campgrounds in the Cougar Recreation Area. The order placed camping restrictions on a 1/2-mile strip on either side of Forest Service Road 19 from Hwy 126 to Forest Service Road 1927 as well as Terwilliger Hot Springs, Hidden Lake Day Use Area, areas surrounding Delta Campground, Slide Creek Campground, and Echo/East Fork Day Use and Boat Ramp.

Aufderheide Scenic Byway (Forest Service Road 19)

Forest Service Road 19 is part of the 220 mile West Cascades Scenic Byway, which runs north to south, skirting the northern half of Oregon's Cascade Mountain Range. The road connects Highways 126 (McKenzie River) and 58 (Oakridge), winding through the lush undergrowth of the majestic Willamette National Forest and meandering along the cold, clear waters of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers.

The road is popular with for scenic drives, cyclists and hikers. Many popular recreation sites are located along the route, including Cougar Reservoir and Terwilliger (Cougar) Hot Springs.